Township of Scugog Staff Report

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Report Number: PWR-2025-001

Prepared by: Shawna Cornish, Manager Parks and Recreation

Department: Public Works and Recreation

Report To: General Purpose and Administration Committee

Date: September 8, 2025

Reference: Strategic Direction 1: Infrastructure: Leverage and improve roads, transportation, infrastructure, facilities, equipment and assets

SD1 Objective 2: Enhance recreation facilities

Report Title: **Blackstock Arena Remediation Options**

Recommendations:

1. **THAT** Report PWR-2025-001, Blackstock Arena Remediation Options, be received; and

2. **THAT** Council approve Option #2, Purchase and Install a Portable Ammonia Refrigeration Plant to replace the existing Freon Refrigeration Plant at Blackstock Arena.

1. Background:

The intent of this report is to provide Council options for the replacement of the refrigeration plant at the Blackstock Arena as the plant has required several operational repairs during the 2024-2025 and prior seasons. The ice plant has been deemed at the end of its useful life based on the repair history and a recent conditional analysis.

Reports COMS-2025-013 and CAO-2025-008 were previous reports advising Council of the refrigeration plant deficiencies. Staff were directed to investigate the cost of a permanent refrigeration plant, and this report provides several options for Council's consideration.

Important considerations for deciding the amount of investment to continue the operation of the Blackstock Arena is the utilization of the prime-time ice pads at both the Scugog Community Recreation Centre (SCRC), the Blackstock Recreation Complex (BRC) and the financial data for the BRC utilization during past seasons.

1.1 Ice Usage Rates and Current User Groups

The following table provides utilization data from three (3) years pre-Covid and three (3) years' post-Covid. The winters of 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 are not included as the BRC was closed during these seasons.

	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025
BRC	71%	69%	70%	55%	57%	56%

The data shows the BRC ice usage rates were fairly consistent prior to COVID. The BRC was fully closed for two years during the pandemic and accordingly it is taking time to recover with a steady increase in the past two seasons. In 2024-2025, Blackstock lost ice usage time due to start-up weather conditions, some cancellations due to ice plant repairs and scheduling conflicts with the Blackstock Minor Hockey Association.

1.2 Past Blackstock Arena Financials

Staff have provided Council updates regarding the Blackstock Arena financials since 2020 when decisions were made regarding the status of operating the Arena during the pandemic. The following is a list of reports:

- COMS-2020-049 – Re-opening of Blackstock Recreation Complex
- COMS-2021-014 – Blackstock Arena 2021-2022 Season
- COMS-2023-009 – Blackstock Arena 2023-2024 Season
- COMS-2024-009 – Blackstock Arena 2024-2025 Ice Season

The following table provides financial data from the previous three (3) ice seasons.

	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025
Total Arena Expenditures	$113,700	$115,450	$120,600
Total Arena Payroll	$107,800	$128,502	$130,100
Total Ice Revenue Generated	$(81,700)	$(108,800)	$(137,500)
Total Tax Base Cost	$139,800	$135,152	$113,200

The data shows that there is a steady increase in ice revenue generated at the BRC and a decrease in the total tax base cost.

2. Discussion:

The following options have been investigated by staff to provide the justification and financial implications for each of the options to be considered:

2.1. Option #1 - Do Nothing

The Township can continue to operate the existing refrigeration plant until it fails while applying for grant opportunities as in-takes become available. The vision would be to apply for a grant to increase the ice surface from its current size (150’ x 53’) to an NHL size rink (200’ x 85’) with new change rooms.

Option #1 would continue to require Operating budget in 2026.

2.2. Option #2 – Purchase a Portable Ammonia Refrigeration Plant

At the June 23, 2025, Council meeting, Report COMS-2025-013 discussed the purchase of an ammonia portable refrigeration plant that would only support the current sized ice pad and would replace the need to repair the existing cooling tower and heat exchangers. This unit consists of a plate and frame chiller, condenser, brine pump, mounted brine expansion tank and is a turn-key solution. The portable unit could be re-purposed or sold at auction if the Township were successful in securing grant funding for a re-build of the arena and ice pad to regulation size.

Installation of the portable unit would be scheduled in April 2026 after the upcoming winter season has concluded and would be ready for opening in October 2026.

Option #2 would cost approximately $600,800 and commence as a Capital project.

2.3. Option #3 - Supply and Install Permanent Ammonia Refrigeration Plant

At the June 23, 2025, meeting, staff were requested to obtain a quote for a permanent refrigeration plant solution at the Blackstock Arena. The permanent refrigeration plant consists of a plate and frame chiller, compressor, condenser, pumps, expansion tanks, new exhaust ventilation and exhaust system, unit heater and insulation. This refrigeration plant is sized for an NHL ice pad (200’ x 85”) and could be used if we were successful in obtaining a grant for the increased sized arena and ice pad.

Grants have been submitted twice for the reduced scope project in the past and both were unsuccessful.

Installation of the permanent refrigeration plant would commence in April 2026 and be completed prior to October 2026.

Option #3 would cost approximately $1,097,000 and commence as a Capital project.

2.4. Option #4 - Lease a Portable Ammonia Refrigeration Plant

At the June 23, 2025, meeting staff were asked if leasing the portable ammonia refrigeration plant was an option. The refrigeration contractor has advised that they do not provide leasing as an option for that type of unit.

2.5. Option #5 - Purchase Tensioned Fabric (“Sprung”) Structure

At the July 9, 2025, Special Council meeting there was mention of a “Sprung Structure” for the Blackstock Arena. Staff have investigated with Town of Collingwood staff regarding their Central Park Arena that was constructed in 2012.

The facility consists of a sand-floor NHL size ice pad, a “skid-plant” for ice making, a pre-assembled unit to connect to the glycol system, in addition to bleacher seating for approximately 390 people, dressing rooms, offices, restrooms and meeting rooms at a cost of $7.5 million dollars.

Backed by more than 130 years of experience and innovation in designing tensioned fabric membrane solutions, sprung structures consistently outperform

when it comes to rapid construction, design flexibility, energy efficiency, durability, and lower overall project costs.

The tensioned fabric structure option could be built beside the existing BRC arena, which could be repurposed or removed. Construction is turn-key and would take approximately six months. This option would require grant or debenture funding to address its cost.

Option #5 would require more research with the spring industry to obtain a more current quote, however based on the information gathered by staff the approximate cost of $8,000,000 based on current pricing, which contemplates a reduced scope for the Blackstock Arena compared to the Central Park Arena.





Staff have investigated several options and evaluated them based on the total cost of ownership, return on investment, ice allocation/usage, and community living. Staff recommend that Option #2 be considered.

3. Financial Implications:

The following table summarizes the financial implications for each of the options listed above:

Options	Cost	Funding Source	Operating Budget Increase/Reduction
Option #1 – Do Nothing	NA	NA	Operating Budget Status Quo
Option #2 – Purchase Portable Ammonia Refrigeration Plant	$600,800	Major Facilities Reserve	Reduction of approximately $12,000 in annual repairs
Option #3 – Supply and Install Permanent Refrigeration Plant	$1,097,000	Major Facilities Reserve and Debenture balance	Reduction of approximately $12,000 in annual repairs
Option #4 – Lease Stand Alone Ammonia Plant	N/A	N/A	N/A
Option #5 – Tensioned Fabric (Sprung) Structure	~$8,000,000	Major Facilities Reserve, Development Charge Reserve, Grants, and Debenture balance	Reduction of approximately $25,000 in repairs

4. Communication Considerations:

The project timelines will be communicated to the ice user groups at the Blackstock Recreation Complex once a decision has been made. This will provide the groups with an update on major improvements within the facility.

5. Conclusion:

That Council receive the Blackstock Arena Remediation Options staff report and approve Option #2 to facilitate a sustainable ice surface at Blackstock Arena for the 2026-2027 winter season.

Respectfully Submitted by:	Reviewed By:
Shawna Cornish Manager of Parks and Recreation	Grant Taylor, Director of Public Works & Recreation

Attachments:

Attachment 1: Blackstock Arena Refrigeration Plant Replacement, COMS-2025-013
Attachment 2: Blackstock Arena Refrigeration Plant Replacement – Update, CAO-2025-008